



National Initiative for Consumer Horticulture

Plan of Work 2020-2021

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NICH PLANNING July-October 2019

The Process: The team met twice a month for one hour on-line. We began with a review and update of external conditions. We then considered the definition of consumer horticulture and the mission and vision statement of NICH. We reviewed all ongoing projects and developed the plan for 2020-21.

Proposed Modifications:

Definition of Consumer Horticulture

Consumer horticulture is the cultivation, use and enjoyment of plants, gardens, landscapes and related horticultural items to the benefit of individuals, communities and the environment. These activities rely on the understanding and application of the art, science, and business of horticulture.

“Business” was added to the last sentence.

Mission Statement

The Mission of the National Initiative for Consumer Horticulture is to grow a healthy world through the art, science and business of plants, gardens and landscapes.

The word “business” was added.

Vision Statement

Every household participates in Consumer Horticulture

Got rid of the specific numbers and made it more aspirational. Changed US to nation.

NICH Core Values

The National Initiative for Consumer Horticulture embraces:

- A foundation of diversity and inclusion.
- The importance of research, education and extension engagement.
- Support for innovation and creativity
- A focus that blends environmental, social and economic issues.
- The need for accountability and relevance.

- An expectation of service.

External Conditions, Trends and Assumption That Affect Consumer Horticulture and NICH

Social and Cultural Environment:

- In an increasingly urbanized world, Consumer Horticulture will continue to flourish as individuals and institutions recognize and appreciate the benefits of growing and caring for plants including physical and mental health; quality of life; and social well-being.
- Growing plants connects people with the environment and provides an opportunity for them to get their hands dirty, satisfying a desire to connect with their environment, regardless of where one calls home.
- As concerns about climate change, foodborne illness, pesticides, bio-technology, and environmental impacts increase, people will become more invested in growing some of their own food.
- The re-settlement of downtown areas will promote interest in smaller space gardening ("square foot", bio-intensive, permaculture, windowsill, roof-top) as well as micro-parks, community gardens, and urban farms.
- The value consumers place on reducing inputs and gardening in an ecologically sound manner will grow.
- There will be increased interest in getting children outdoors to provide opportunities for discovery and environmental stewardship with formal and informal nature and horticulture education. As children and adults grow more of their own food, there will be an increase in fruit and vegetable consumption, a direct result of understanding where their food comes from and what it takes to successfully grow and cultivate it.
- Information organization and delivery will evolve to match technological opportunity and consumer demand.

Economic/Business Environment:

- People will continue to have disposable income sufficient to engage in Consumer Horticulture.
- Personal economic benefit will not be a major driving factor for Consumer Horticulture growth. However, in some areas, where the law allows, food produced in end consumer's gardens can be to be sold.
- Industry Economic benefit is the major driving force for Consumer Horticulture
- Horticultural industries have expanded marketing past baby boomers to younger groups of consumers.
- Time and perceived effort will be the major limiting factor in engaging people in Consumer Horticulture.
- Industry marketing efforts will increasingly emphasize practices and products perceived by consumers to be more environmentally friendly.
- Government and private-sector stakeholders will organize efforts to elevate the perceived relevance and value of Consumer Horticulture.

- A slowed economic recovery will benefit some Consumer Horticulture commercial sectors.
- Economic growth and recessions will affect the industry.
- Industry will take a more prominent role in education and outreach including the use of technology to enhance horticultural experiences.
- Maintaining market share will require Consumer Horticulture industries to respond nimbly to consumer preferences for more environmentally friendly products.
- End consumers are moving toward consumption of alternative crops (cannabis, hops, hemp, slow flowers)
- Edible and medicinal plant production is still trending upward.

Governmental/Political Environment:

- Decision-makers will recognize the social and economic value of Consumer Horticulture, and that added costs associated with planning, development and maintenance are justified.
- Decision-makers will better understand how the design of public spaces can promote active, healthy lifestyles and will advance land use policies that prioritize physical and psychological wellness.
- Decision-makers will recognize the benefits of integrating plants with infrastructure, and policies endorsing the functional use of plants (e.g. green roofs, living wall, bioswales) will grow in popularity.
- Extreme fluctuations in precipitation, leading to both drought and flooding, will impact larger portions of the United States, resulting in changes to water use regulation and management practices.
- Enhanced societal awareness of the importance of clean air, soil and water will fuel support for policies that promote the role of plants in the remediation, filtration, and conservation of our shared resources.
- An increased demand for environmental and horticultural education will inspire modifications to school curricula and the corresponding regulation of subject matter and educational requirements.
- Consumer Horticulture is particularly vulnerable to federal and state environmental regulations and will be affected by the opposing interests of a wide range of political, commercial and private stakeholders.

Science and Technology Environment:

- Consumer horticulture is poised to play an integral role in addressing environmental challenges.
- Consumer horticulture professionals will be challenged to meet the increased public and commercial interest in gardening, urban farming, and green technologies in an era of shrinking institutional support at federal, state and local levels.
- Environmental concerns, including climate change and associated stresses (e.g. such as drought and extreme weather) will drive the development of technologies and production methods that support healthy plants and sustainable horticultural landscapes resilient to these stresses.

- The demand for quick and easy access to information will drive Consumer Horticulture professionals to become more effective in using technology to provide information. This will include establishing greater demand for research-based information.
- Commerce and travel will exacerbate the arrival of invasive species of plants and animals, putting increasing pressure on agencies responsible for interdiction, surveillance, and management strategies.

Agricultural Environment:

- Consumer horticulture is an important driver of the agricultural economy, however its value in the larger agriculture discussion is often dismissed as “only a hobby.”
- Young adult consumer horticulture purchases are growing, especially in succulents and houseplants and residential and community agriculture production.
- Research in sustainable gardening methods and sustainable landscape planning and cultivation will provide strategies for consumer horticulture to meet future challenges.
- Water shortages across the country will necessitate the development of water conservation measures and alternatives, including developing cultivars that require less water.
- To increase consumer horticulture, we must track and anticipate consumer trends, and promote a new plant aesthetic that addresses:
 - Increased consumer appreciation for environmental stewardship – leading to plants and practices reliant on fewer external inputs.
 - Increased consumer interest in invasive plant eradication and responsible pest management – leading to the promotion of a systems-based approach to pest management and overall landscape health.
 - Increased consumer interest in utilizing controlled environments and protective structures to grow plants – leading to the marketing and sales of specific plants and materials to extend growing seasons and increase the productivity of consumer gardens.

NICH 2020-2021 Plan

Goal: Communicate the NICH Mission and Vision to Stakeholders

Projects:

- 1) Develop brand guidelines (**MarCom**)
- 2) Redesign the website so there is an inward and outward facing aspect. **Create committee** to address this.
- 3) Reach out to other organizations and recruit them to the NICH mission (**MarCom** is doing this).
- 4) Release at least one eblast a month **Exec Committee** and **MarCom**.

- 5) Develop an integrated social media campaign based on Teasers (**Pending**).
- 6) Implement the social media campaign (**Pending**).

Goal: Build Support for the NICH Mission and Vision

Projects:

1) Create scientifically based plant promotional products for use in academic and commercial marketing. Create monthly promotional pieces (two each month, 24 total). The tentative process is outlined in Figure 1. It is the responsibility of the committees to identify relevant source material and synthesize the information into a form useful for marketing and promotion. Councils will assist in the scheduling and planning. All council and committees will be given an opportunity to comment.

Figure 1. Tentative model for creation of plant promotional products.



Goal: Support Scientific Exploration of all Aspects of Consumer Horticulture

Projects:

- 1) Increase CH influence in NIFA and the USDA.
 - Attend all NIFA Listening Session (**ongoing**).
 - Seek Relevancy Reviewers for NIFA grant review committees (**ongoing**).
- 2) Write letters of support for research projects that support the NICH Research and Extension Strategic Plan (**ongoing**).

3) Farm Bill 2023- Create a committee to articulate a specific ask for the 2023 Farm Bill and to identify potential collaborators. The planning committee talked about the importance of assuring the *use* (rather than focus on the production or sale) of specialty crops in urban areas is included in SCRI funding (**pending**).

Goal: *Increase Effectiveness* of NICH Workflow or Grow and Evolve the Mission of NICH

Projects:

- 1) Create Development Committee to explore and recommend a funding option.
- 2) Chose an option (above) and create implementation plan
- 3) Execute Plan
- 4) Hire a coordinator/director/brand manager.